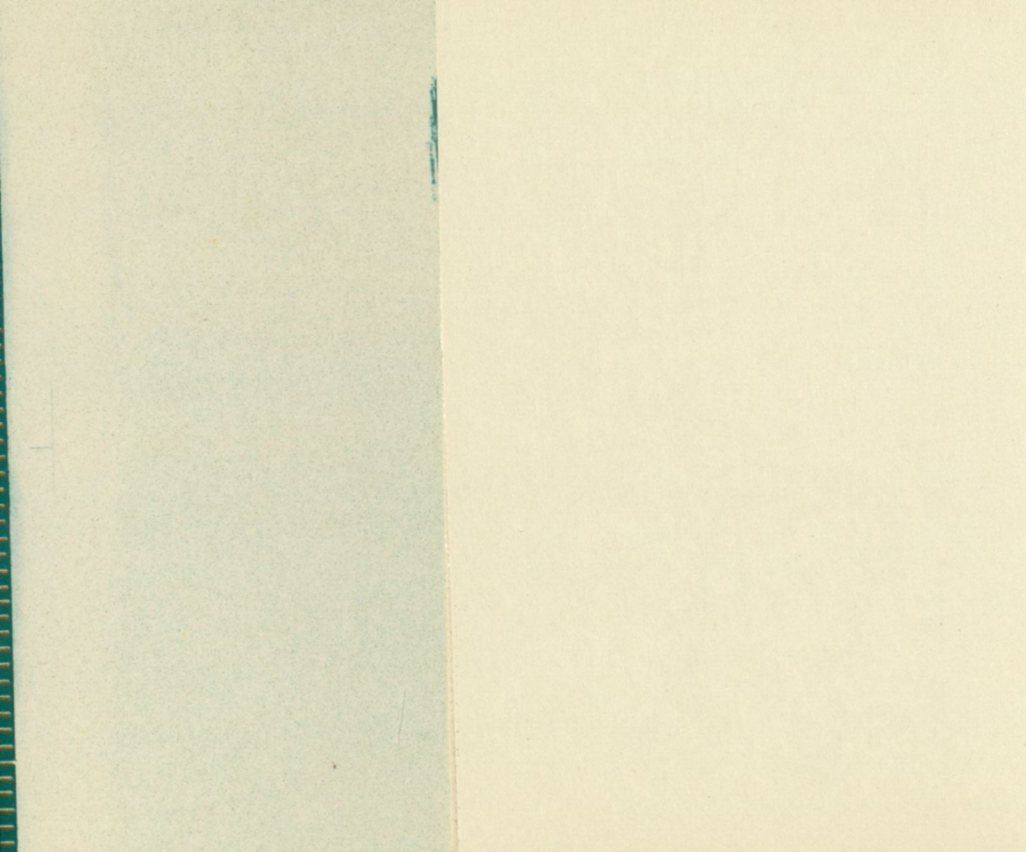


Annie Besant



**The
Universal
Law
of Life**



The Universal Law of Life

Two Addresses by Annie Besant given at the
World Parliament of Religions

September 1893

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Branch, to serve as Chairman of the Committee on Organization and it was therefore Wright's responsibility to apply for representation at the Parliament. The first application from Wright was turned over to the chairman of the Psychic Committee, a Dr Elliott Coues who had had serious difficulties with Judge and who had published slanderous statements against H.P. Blavatsky some years previously. Therefore, knowing the attitude that Coues was likely to take towards an application from the Theosophical Society, Wright asked that the application be submitted to another committee, whereupon it was given to the Moral and Social Reform Committee, the chairman of which turned out to be Coues' sister. Finally, the application was submitted to the Religious Committee, who agreed to grant the Society a Congress of its own within the Parliament, the President of the World Congress Auxiliary writing to Wright requesting that topics of occult and psychic phenomena and research be excluded from the theosophical contributions.

During the Theosophical Congress, within the Parliament itself, some thirty papers were read so that in addition to the presentations by Mrs Besant, lectures were given by such eminent Theosophists of that day as Dr Jerome Anderson, Dr J. D. Buck, Prof. G. N. Chakravarti (who had come from India for the Congress), Mrs Isabel Cooper-Oakley, and of course Judge himself who chaired most of the sessions. Accounts of the proceedings of the Congress were published in Judge's journal *The Path*, in November 1893, and in *The Pacific Theosophist*, a journal edited by Dr Anderson. According to those accounts, the Theosophists had first been assigned to a hall with a seating capacity of 250, but in five minutes after the doors were opened, that hall was filled to overflowing. The managers of the building (the Art Palace in which Parliament was being held) next gave the Society a hall capable of holding 1500, but that too was quickly filled, so that two adjoining halls had to be assigned to the Society. The last two sessions of

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the Congress were held in a hall with a seating capacity of 3,000 and this too was filled. Dr Anderson's report gives this interesting sidelight on the occasion when Annie Besant was the featured speaker:

It so happened that on the Sunday night we held one of our principal meetings, the Presbyterians had their principal gathering in an adjoining hall. There were many of the Church's noted preachers on hand to deliver lectures. Our hall was packed full and while Mr Judge was speaking [chairing the meeting] Dr Burrows, chairman of the entire Parliament, came upon our stage and said that owing to the fact that it had been announced in the city that the Presbyterians would hold their Congress in this hall instead of the adjoining one, there was no question but that many had gotten into the wrong place; that there was no audience

in the other hall to listen to those men who had come so far to speak, and in justice to them he requested that all who were there by mistake please follow him out. He marched out with a great deal of confidence but not a single person followed him, and when the doors opened to let him out, twenty-five or thirty came into our already packed hall.

It was then, to an over-crowded hall, following the reading of seven papers by various members of the Theosophical Society, that Annie Besant delivered her address, 'The Supreme Duty', in which she said: 'I proclaim ... the universal law of life', and proceeded to speak of the high ideal of service. The words she said on that occasion as well as those she spoke at the concluding session of the Congress the following afternoon, when her title was 'Theosophy and Ethics', are as relevant today as they were a century ago.

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What is the theosophical view of ethics, of altruistic service for others, of individual conduct? Here in these two lectures by Annie Besant, later to become the Theosophical Society's second world President, we may find both practical suggestions for a mode of living consonant with theosophical ideals and inspiration to act in such a manner as may bring about that global transformation which signals the dawning of the 'brotherhood' enunciated in the First Object of the Theosophical Society. Today, as national and state legislative bodies struggle with codes of ethics and propose laws enforcing ethical conduct in the realm of politics, Annie Besant's words (and they must be read in the light of the language as well as the culture of her day, overlooking what was surely never intended to be a sexist vocabulary) strike at the very heart of the human problem: the need to realize and to live in accordance with the realization that all life is ONE.

Preface

As the centenary of the first World Parliament of Religions approaches, it is appropriate, therefore, that we reprint Annie Besant's two stirring addresses. The message she gave in 1893 may encourage us to speak with no less conviction and with equal passion for the cause of the human spirit when we participate, as we should, in the commemoration in 1993 of that first notable Parliament.

JOY MILLS

The Supreme Duty

I SPEAK tonight on the supreme duty. I proclaim tonight the universal law of life; for only by service is fullness of life made possible, to the service of man the whole of the universe today is yoked. For under the name of man, man past, present, and future, man evolving up to the divine man, eternal, immortal, indestructible, that is the service to which every individual should be pledged, that the object of life, that the fashion of evolution; and I shall try to put for you tonight in few words something of the elements of this service, something of its meaning in daily life, as well as something of the heights whereto the daily practice may at length conduct the human soul, for poor indeed is that religion which cannot teach the men and women of the world the duty of daily life, and yield to them inspiration which shall aid them in their upward climbing to the light.

Great is philosophy which moulds the minds of men, great is science which gives light of knowledge to the world; but greater than all is

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religion which teaches man his duty, which inspires man with strength to accomplish it; greatest of all is that knowledge of the human soul which makes daily service the path of progress and finds in the lowest work the steps that lead to the highest achievement.

According to the philosophy which we stand here to represent, we have in the universe and in man various planes of being, sevenfold in their full enumeration. A briefer classification will serve me for the hints which alone I can throw out tonight. Let us take the plane of the physical man and see what on that plane the service of man may connote. First of all, the service of man implies what was called by the Buddha right livelihood, that is, right fashion of gaining ordinary life, honest way of gaining the means of ordinary existence. Not a livelihood based on the compelled service of others, not a livelihood which takes everything and gives nothing back, not a livelihood which stretches out its hands to grasp and closes its fists when gift is asked

instead of gain. Right livelihood implies honesty of living, and honesty implies that you give as much as you take, that you render back more than you receive, that you measure your work by your power of service, not by your power of compulsion. That the stronger your brain the greater your duty to help, that the higher your position the more imperative the cry to bend that position to the service of human need. Right livelihood is based on justice. Right livelihood is made beautiful by love, and if there is to be a reckoning between the giving and the taking, then let the scale of giving weigh the heavier, and give to man far more than you take from him.

But on the material plane more is asked of you than the discharge of this part of duty, right livelihood, that injures none and serves all. You have also a duty of right living that touches on the plane of the body, by which I include tonight the whole of the transitory part of man, and right living means the recognition of the influence that you bring to bear upon the world by the whole of your lower

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nature as well as by the higher. It implies the understanding of the duty that the body of each bears to the bodies of all, for you cannot separate your bodies from the bodies amidst which you live, since constant interchange is going on between them. Tiny lives that build you up today help to build up another tomorrow, and so the constant interaction and interweaving of these physical molecules proceed. What use do you make of your body? Do you say: 'It is mine. I can do with it as I will. Shall not a man do as he will with his own?' Even so. But there is nothing a man has that is his own, for all belongs to that greater Man, the aggregate humanity, and the fragments have no rights that go against the claim of service to the whole. So that you are responsible for the use that you make of your bodies. If when these tiny lives come into your charge you poison them with alcohol, you render them coarse and gross with over-luxurious living and send them out into the community of which you form a part, and send them out to other men and women and children, they sow

there the seeds of the vices they have learned from you, of the gluttony, of the intemperance, the impurity of living that you have stamped on them while they remained as part of your own body. You have no right to do it. No excuse can bear you guiltless of the crime. There are drunkards amongst us. Granted they are responsible for their crime, but also every human being is responsible for them who helps to spread the poison in a community which is focalized in those miserable creatures. And so every atom that you send out alcohol-poisoned from yourself helps to make drunkenness more permanent, helps to make its grip tighter upon the victims already in its grasp, and you are guilty of your brother's degradation if you do not supply pure atoms of physical life to build up others who in very truth are one with yourself.

And so you have something of what service of man means on this lower plane, and another service that you, above all, richer people in this land and in others, could set an example of,

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so that others from your voluntary action may learn to follow in the same path. You should simplify the physical life, you should lessen the physical wants, you should think less of luxury and more of the higher life, less labour wasted to minister to the artificial wants of the body, and more time for the souls of men to grow less encumbered with the anxieties of life. If you take such teaching to the poor, true as the teaching is, one hardly dares to put it to them on whom the iron yoke of poverty presses, and who find in so much of physical suffering one of the miseries of their life. You should set the example, because with you it is voluntary action. You should set the ideal of plain living and high thinking instead of the ideal of senseless luxury, of gross materialistic living on every side. Can you blame the poor that they think so much of earthly pleasure, that they desire so passionately material ease? Can you blame them if in every civilized country discontent is growing, threats are filling the air, when you set the ideal which they copy

in their desire, and when you, by the material pleasure of your lives, tell them that man's aim and object is but the joy of the sense, is but the pleasure of the moment? This also is your duty in the service of man on a material plane, so that, lessening the wants of the body, he may learn to feed the soul, and making the outer life more nobly simple may give his energies rather to that which is permanent and which endures.

But not only on the physical, the lowest plane, is the service of man to be sought. We rise to the mental plane, and there too must man be served far more efficaciously than he can be served on the physical plane. Do you say that at least, 'I cannot do service on the mental plane? That the mental plane is all very well for the great thinker that publishes some work that revolutionizes thought? That it is all very well for the speaker who reaches thousands where I can reach but units?' It is not so. The great thinker, be he writer or be he speaker, has not such enormous overplus of impulse as

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you, judging by the outer appearance, may imagine. True, his work is great, but has it never struck you in what lies the power of the speaker, whence comes the strength with which he moves a crowd? It does not lie in himself; it lies not in his own power, but in the power he is able to evoke from the men and women he addresses, from the human hearts he wakes. It is their energy and not his in the tide of his speech. The orator is but the tongue that syllables out the thoughts in the hearts of the people; they are not able to speak them, they are not able to articulate them. The thoughts are there, and when some tongue puts them into speech, when the other inarticulate sense takes the force of the spoken word, then they think it is oratory. It is their own hearts that move them, and it is this voice, inarticulate in the people, which from the lips of the speaker makes the power that rings from land to land.

But that is not all. Every one of you in your daily thinking, every one of you has thoughts that you pour out to the world. You are

making the possibilities of the morrow, you are making or marring the potencies of today. Even as you think, the thought burning in your brain becomes a living force for good or for evil in the mental atmosphere just as far as the vitality and the strength that are in it may be able to carry it on in its work of this world of mind. There is no woman however weak, there is no man however obscure, who has not in the soul within him one of the creative forces of the world. As he thinks, thoughts from him go out to mould the thoughts and lives of other men. As he thinks thoughts of love and gentleness, the whole reservoir of love in the world is filled to overflowing; and as he contributes to them, so every day is formed that public opinion which is the moulder of men's ideas more than sometimes we are apt to dream. So that in this everyone has share, so that in this all men and women have their part. Your thought-power makes you creative gods in the world, and it is thus that the future is builded, it is thus the race climbs upward to the divine.

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Not alone in the physical nor alone in the mental sphere is this constant service of man to be sought; but of the service of the spiritual sphere, no words of platform oratory can fitly describe its nature or its sacredness. That is the work that is done in silence, without sound of spoken word, of clatter of human endeavour. That work lies above us and around us, and we must have learned the perfection of the service in the lower ere we dare aspire to climb where the spiritual work is done. What, then, is the outcome of such suggestion, what the effect in life of such philosophy applied to the life of each as it is made or met in the world today? Surely it is that we should think nobly. Surely it is that our ideals should be lofty. Surely it is that in our daily life we should ever strike the highest keynote, and then strive to attune the living to the keynote that at our noblest we have struck. According to the ideal the will is lifted. In the old phrase, the man becomes that which he worships. Let us see, then, that our ideals be lofty. Let us see that what we worship shall have

in it the power that shall transform us into the image of the perfect man; that shall transmute us into the perfect gold of which humanity shall finally consist. If you would help in that evolution, if you would bear your share in that great labour, then let your ideal be truth; truth in every thought and act of life. Think true, otherwise you will act falsely. Let nothing of duplicity, nothing of insincerity, nothing of falsehood soil the inner sanctuary of your life, for if that be pure your actions will be spotless, and the radiance of the eternal truth shall make your lives strong and noble. Not only be true, but also be pure, for out of purity comes the vision of the divine, and only the pure in heart, as said the Christ, shall see God. That is true. In whatever phrase you put it, that is true, whatever words describe it. Only the pure in heart shall have the beatific vision, for that which is itself absolute purity must be shared in by the worshipper ere it can be seen.

And then add to these ideals of truth and of purity one that is

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lacking in our modern life, the ideal of reverence for what is noble, of adoration for that which is higher than one's self. Modern life is becoming petty because we are not strong enough to reverence. Modern life is becoming base, sordid, and vulgar because men fear that they will sink if they bow their heads to that which is greater than they are themselves. I tell you that worship of that which is higher than yourself raises you, it does not degrade you. That the feeling of reverence is a feeling that lifts you up, it does not take you down. We have talked so much about rights that we have forgotten that which is greater than a man's right with himself. It is the power of seeing what is nobler than he has dreamed of, and bowing in the very dust before it till it permeates his life and makes him like itself. Only those who are weak are afraid to obey; only those who are feeble are afraid of humility. Democrats we are in our modern phrase, and with the world of today as we have it democracy in the external world is the best fashion of carrying on the outer life. But if it were possible that

as in the days of old in Egypt and India the very gods themselves wandered the earth as men, and taught the people the higher truth, trained the people in the higher life, conveyed to the people the higher knowledge, would we claim that we were their equals, and that we should be degraded by sitting at their feet to learn? And if you could weave into your modern life that feeling of reverence for that which is purest, noblest, grandest; for wisdom, for strength, for purity, till the passion of your reverence should bring the qualities into your own life—Oh, then your future as a nation would be secure. Then your future as a people would be glorious, and you men and women of America, creators of the future, will you not rise to the divine possibilities which every one of you has hidden in his own heart? Why go only to the lower when the stars are above you? Why go only to the dust when the sun sends down his beams that on those beams you may rise to his very heart? Yours is the future, for you are making it today, and as you build the temple of your nation,

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as you hope that in the days to come it shall rise nobly amongst the peoples of the earth and stand as pioneer of true life, of true greatness, lay you the foundations strong today. No building can stand whose foundations are rotten, no nation can endure whose foundations are not divine. You have the power. Yours is the choice, and as you exercise it the America of centuries to come will bless you for your living or will condemn you for your failure; for you are the creators of the world, and as you will so it shall be.

Theosophy and Ethics

IN the part of the syllabus that we are considering this afternoon, we have to conclude the discussion opened by our Indian brother, tracing on from step to step the meaning of altruism, the growth of morality, the sanction, the motive of ethics, and the identity of moral teaching in every great religion in the world. That we have chosen as a final presentment in this Congress of our philosophy, for all philosophy has its right ending in ethics and in conduct, which is of the most vital importance to men and women in their daily life.

First of all, then, we have the word, 'altruism', 'incumbent', it is said, 'because of man's common origin, common training, common destiny', and so on. And it is true that in the earliest stages of moral life, altruism must be the goal that we set before ourselves. The service of others is what we should strive to perfect. But sometimes it has also seemed to me that altruism is itself but a stage of progress rather than the goal. That as long as service is consciously service of others, that is, of

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others separated from our own self, there is still incompleteness in the ethics, there is still lack of spirituality in the soul.

Some of you may remember that exquisite Persian poem in which the lover, seeking his beloved, finds closed against him the door of her chamber, and knocks, pleading for admission. From within the closed room sounds a voice asking, 'Who asks for admission?' And believing that his love was the best claim that could be given for his entry, he answered, 'It is thy beloved that knocks.' But there was silence within the room and the door remained closed against the suppliant. Out into the world he went and learned deeper lessons of life and of love; and coming back once more to the closed door, he struck thereon and asked for entry. Again the voice came, 'Who is it that knocks?' But the answer this time was other than at first. No longer 'Thy beloved' came the words, but 'It is thyself that knocks,' and then the door unclosed, he passed the threshold. For all true love has its root in unity, and there again it is not

twain but one. So it would seem that in the highest ethic this is the true note that we should strike, inasmuch as for our best beloved there is no such thing as service regarded as altruistic, because the deepest joy and the highest pleasure come in serving that which is in very truth the better self of each; so as we grow in spiritual life and understand the true oneness of humanity, we shall find in that humanity the best beloved. We shall serve our higher self in serving it, and thus once more we come back to that from which we started, the Invisible, the One and the All.

And altruism, glorious as it is in the lower stages of morality—altruism itself—is lost in the Supreme Oneness of the human soul, in the absolute indivisibility of the spirit in man. While, however, we are still consciously separate, altruism may rightly be regarded as the Law of Life, based on a common origin in the divine, based in the common training, the pilgrimage which every soul of man must tread; based also in common experience, in that life after life where we have to learn every lesson, acquire

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all knowledge, share the various possibilities of human lot, and build out of common material a sublime character. In that life our destiny is one, the perfection of a divine humanity; one in origin, one in training, one in destiny, what shall avail to separate man from man and to build up walls of division between brothers?

Thus this Unity is the foundation of our brotherhood, as brotherhood is the word that includes all our ethics. For it is in the law of Love that all true conduct has its root. As long as external law is needed, that law is the measure of our imperfection; it is only when no law is wanted, when the nature expressing itself spontaneously is one with the divine law, it is only then that humanity is perfected and liberty and law become one for evermore.

Here again is the sanction of right ethics, found in this fact of brotherhood everywhere discoverable in nature. All our European world discussing ethical systems today is asking for some categorical imperative which shall announce duty and right to man. Take what

systems you will in our German schools of philosophy, the system of Kant in Germany or any of the many schools of ethics being gradually built by our English-speaking people—everywhere you will find the question propounded: What is the Imperative? What is the Ought? What is the Thou Shalt, which is to be the training in human life?

It is not possible, say some schools—and you may find this expressed very clearly and well in one of the well-known books of Professor Sedgwick in dealing with the question of Ought. We are face to face with a difficulty as to why we ought. Can we get any further than a conditional imperative? Can we go beyond the statement to men, If you want to reach such a goal, such-and-such is the path you should pursue?

To take his own illustration, you may say to a pupil, 'If you want to paint and be a great artist, you must hold your brush in such fashion; you must train your eye by such-and-such rules;

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you must gradually gain the knowledge which underlies form, and by these many steps you shall at last reach your goal.'

Is morality the same in this sense as art or science? Is it always to depend upon an 'if' so that if man refuses the goal he shall reject right conduct and stand lawless in a universe of law? If that be so, it seems to me that progress will be very slow amongst men, for you would have them first to evolve the conscience, and it is the very training of the conscience for which right ethics is needed. You would be walking constantly in a vicious circle having no point of starting. You would be endeavouring to use a lever with an absent fulcrum, and so find no vantage point to which your force could be applied. It is the categorical imperative we need, not the conditional. Not 'If thou wilt be perfect, do this or that' but 'Thou shalt be perfect, and the Law of Life is thus.'

And is it not true that Nature speaks in such fashion? Is it not true that from the lips of Nature, physical, we will say, there sounds

ever the categorical imperative? Man, ignorant and foolish, unknowing the laws that surround him, desires to follow the promptings of his own untrained will, driven perhaps by the desires of the lower nature and hearing in them the voice that allures and compels. From the lips of Nature drop sternly the words, 'Thou shalt.' Answers the will of man able to choose, 'I will not.' And then there falls upon the silence but the two words, 'Then suffer.'

Such is the way in which physical Nature teaches the inviolability of law. Man, following his own untrained will, strives to follow it, be a fence of physical law around him or not. He dashes himself against the iron wall he cannot break, and the pain of the bruising, the anguish of the mutilation, teaches him that law is inviolable and unchangeable, that it must be obeyed or the disobedient will perish in the struggle.

Is Nature different on her different planes? Does she speak clearly, as well in the moral and in the spiritual world as in the physical?

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Yea, for all Nature is one. The expression of the one divine will is Nature, and until you can change the divine will no law that is the expression of that will can be altered; and, therefore, in morals as much as in physics, this imperative, this categorical imperative, is hers. But unhappily, it has not been undisputed; unhappily, men have thought they could play with morals where they would never dream of playing with physical necessity. They have thought that they could sow one seed and reap another, when they were sowing virtue and vice instead of the mere corn or oats. And they have wondered and they have not understood when each seed is ripened after its own nature, and the moral seed has ripened according to law, and given a corrupt society and degraded humanity and a soul stupefied and drugged by sense.

Does such teaching seem stern and cold? Does it seem as though man, in a remorseless universe, found in the wheels of destiny rolling round him no place of refuge, no harbour in which he might escape?

Does he feel that these wheels moving round him crush him, that law is iron, and destiny cannot be escaped? My brothers, ill do you read the universe if to you law seems cruel, if to you death may seem soulless. Law is but the will of the divine, and the divine who desires your happiness. Law is but the expression of the perfect, and only in perfection can joy and peace be found. Lose sight of this will for a moment, of those wheels that seem to crush you, for though the wheels roll on unchanging, the very heart of the universe is love. Therefore it is that some of us who have caught glimpses of this unity, who have seen that love and justice are one, and that injustice and cruelty would be identical, therefore it is sometimes that, looking at the universe, we feel that while the law is changeless it lifts us instead of crushing us. And has not your own Emerson taught you the same lesson? Can you remember in one of those marvellous essays of his he taught the great truth that Nature only looks cruel while we oppose her; she is our strongest helper when we join ourselves

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to her. For every law that crushes you while you oppose it lifts you when you are united to it. Every force that is against you while you are lawless, is on your side when you make yourself one with law. He tells you to hitch your waggon on to a star, for then the waggon shall move with all the force of the planet above you; and is it not a greater destiny even to suffer until we learn the law, than to escape it and remain in ignorance when the law is that which brings us ultimately to triumph? Nature is conquered by obedience, and the divine is found in a unity of justice and of love.

Brotherhood, then, in its full meaning, is a law in Nature. Stress has more than once been laid on this in our meetings, but not too much stress has thereon been laid. For it is the very object, the desire, of our work that brotherhood shall become practical in society, and it will never become practical until men understand that it is a law, and not only an aspiration. It is a common experience that when men have discovered a law of nature, they no longer fight against

it. They at once accommodate themselves to the new knowledge. They at once adapt themselves to the newly-understood conditions, and in that very way have preached brotherhood. And yet brotherhood is but so little known in our western world! Is it not possible that men have disobeyed, not because they do not recognize the beauty of the ideal, but because they have not understood its absolute necessity, and the failure of every effort that goes against the universal law in life.

Brothers in our bodies by that interaction of physical molecules of which our Brother Judge has already spoken; brothers in our minds by that interaction of mental images and mental pictures whereby every one of us is constantly affecting his brothers. In our spirits, above all, and on every plane of life, brotherhood exists as fact.

And it must be remembered, in dealing with this brotherhood, that the word is meant to imply everything that it means in what we call the closest relationships of daily life. We are apt to make a distinction between brethren in churches and those outside. We should follow

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in that which we preach of, if it is that real brotherhood of love that we desire amongst men. Sometimes it is said that by ceasing to love the nearest we shall grow to love impersonal humanity. It is not so. The life of love is a growth upward, an expansion ever widening, growing out from the family to the city, from the city to the state; from the nation to humanity. It does not begin by dwarfing the love of the home. It starts there and it carries on all the passions—the passion and the pity that the mother feels for the child of her own body, and extends that love to embrace every child and son of man—not by cooling down love, but by strengthening and widening it out.

Thus is brotherhood to grow and the race to become practically, as it is essentially, one. For it is these relationships that teach the wider possibility, and so, in the Book of the Golden Precepts, one of the most exquisite gifts that we have received from the East through H.P. Blavatsky, we are told, 'Follow the wheel of life; follow the wheel of duty to race and kin'; as those duties are properly discharged we

become worthy of the wider work. The heart widens out because it is never closed against any. And at the very beginning of the path, the first step the disciple is bidden to take is to make his heart respond to every cry of nature, so that, as the heart-string quivers under the touch, he, as string, shall quiver to every cry of need that comes from his brother's lips. But if we confine our love to those with whom nature has put us, it is lower love. The lower love is selfish, exclusive, taking from the outside to give to the personally beloved, and careless for the wants of others provided one's own is satisfied. I mean one's own in the family, not one's own personally. That is not true love. It is a form only of selfishness, and when you find in our teaching that such love is to be destroyed, it means that love must be purified of every taint of personality, and so we must grow ever upward, widening as we grow, because the love that we are to give to our brother man is to be measured by his want of it, and not by any of the lesser ties of personality that may bind us to him or may be absent

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between him and us. The measure of want—that is the measure of giving. The agony that cries for help—that is the claim that we have to answer. And so our teachers train us to discharge the nearest duty so that we may carry on the strength of that to the wider duty, and thus make our love to man as the love of husband to wife, as the love of brother to sister, finding in the pain but joy in the sacrifice, because the happiness of the beloved is deeper than the momentary pain of that which is given to us.

Thus, then we learn, as it were, the sanction, the motive, that which Nature tells us as regards this human brotherhood, and from that we step onward to deal with those who are not yet quite touched with that light of reality which makes the appeal to the divine in man the mightiest of impulses.

For as man develops he answers to nobler and nobler impulses, and at first, very often, the method of the teacher must be the method of Nature, which allows men to learn by pain the reality that I was

speaking of with regard to the law. And so by karma we scent another sanction for right ethics; so we teach men that selfishness can but breed sorrow and evil, can have no other offspring than misery. If they will not learn by love they must learn by pain. If they will not learn by longing for god, they must learn by experience of the evil; and if that real tree of life which is in every human heart does not sufficiently attract them to the eating of its fruit, the tree of Life Eternal whose fruits are but of love and duty, then they must eat of the tree of knowledge of evil as well as of good, so that if, to quote one of the sweetest of our English poets, 'If goodness lead him not, then weariness may toss him to My breast.' For that is the voice of the Spirit crying in the world, crying to all that has gone out from it to come back. If its voice does not attract, then suffering must be used for a time to drive. Back the wanderer must come; the exile cannot remain abroad; his seat is empty in the home, it waits for his return, and if he will not come by love, then by starving on the

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husks that are fit food for swine he must learn the lesson. And the unrest of the transitory, the dissatisfaction of the temporal, that shall turn his steps once more homeward till he come near enough to be drawn by love and no longer by pain.

Thus, then, we have the foundation which deals with facts as sanction for righteousness, and thus reincarnation once more comes in in order to show us that only by right living can progress be made, that if selfishness is to be eradicated unselfish acts must be performed, selfish thoughts must be destroyed, for in reincarnation it is thought which moulds the character, and none can mould the character towards evil and thus discover tendencies to good. Thus we remove arbitrariness from the moral world by knowledge of self. Knowledge has removed it from the physical. Thus we take away all the doubt and the hope that springs from the doubt, that we may escape the results of our own actions and creep into unearned bliss by some side door of vicarious atonement where we have not laboured and where we have not wrought.

We learn that each must walk on his own feet, that each man must grow by his own effort. Though brother souls must help him, he must also help himself. For truth does not need invertebrate people saved by the goodness of another. Truth needs men and women strong to stand in the strength they have acquired for themselves, strong that by their example the still weaker may be inspired, and gradually each one may show himself divine.

But all this is not new. There is nothing new save the words that clothe it, nothing new save the garment that is woven round it. We have had all this as our priceless heritage for millions of years, and yet we have not recognized our treasure. Every great teacher of religion has taught what here I feebly repeat today. Every great one who has come into the world in order to strike the keynote of morality has spoken the same language, has uttered the same thought.

Turn to the scriptures of the world and see how one moral nutriment is found in all. Will you go to China, Lao-tze will teach you the law

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of love, and teach you the very doctrine familiar in your own creed; for Lao-tze, speaking six hundred years before Christ was born, laid down that law of curing evil by good. Yes, we have not yet learned the only law of Peace. 'The untruthful', he said, 'I will meet with truth, as I meet the truthful also. I will meet the liberal with liberality, I will meet the illiberal with liberality also. The faithful I will meet with faith, the unfaithful I will meet with faith also. I will cure the miser by generosity, I will cure the liar by truth.'

So, as from the lips of a Chinese teacher, there drops from those of a great Hindu sage exactly the same thought, when in the tenfold system of duties Manu put forgiveness of injuries as the vital law of the progress of the soul. So, six centuries before Christ, the Buddha repeated the lesson: 'To him that causelessly injures me I will return the protection of my ungrudging love. The more evil comes from him the more good shall flow from me.' Exactly the same lesson flows from the lips of the great Jewish teacher when in the Sermon

on the Mount he bids his disciples: 'Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, that you may be the children of your Father in Heaven, who sendeth his sunlight on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain alike on the just and on the unjust.'

The voice is one, whether from Jew or Buddhist, whether from Hindu or Chinaman, the words are wellnigh one, the spirit is identical. What want we, then, of new morality, while the old remains unfulfilled? Why ask for new teaching when the old is so high above our accomplishment today? It may be that amongst far-off generations, when the growth of man has been perfected, it may be that in some future cycle of evolution, some morality undreamed of today, some ethic more noble, more sublime, more pure, may come from the lips of some god to man. We are not ready for such teaching, we are not yet prepared for such instruction. Enough for us the ancient law of love, for until we have fulfilled that, no other horizon can open before our eyes.

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And so, at this last of our sessional meetings, we close with that with which we started, the law of a divine life that brings all things with it, the law of a divine love that is the guiding light of man.

Born of the spirit, we go towards the Spirit. Born of the divine love, we live until that love is perfected in us, and when that love is made perfect, what lips of man may syllable, what brain of man may conceive, what further heights of beauty, what further depths of joy, what further possibilities of illimitable expansion, lie before those souls whose life is one with the divine. Bound to the feet of divinity, they last as long as it. Boundless as deity itself, no limitations can check the spirit that lives in man.

